

VZCZCXRO8765
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHSL #0298/01 1881502
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P R 071502Z JUL 09
FM AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0020
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHSL/AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA 0040

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRATISLAVA 000298

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/CE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 7/7/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CH](#) [LO](#) [PHUM](#)
SUBJECT: CHINESE PRESIDENT HU IN SLOVAKIA: BUSINESS AND PROTESTS

BRATISLAVA 00000298 001.2 OF 002

CLASSIFIED BY: Susan M. Ball, CDA, State.
REASON: 1.4 (b)

¶1. (C) Summary. Chinese President Hu Jintao visited Slovakia on June 18-19. While the Slovak Government deemed the visit a success because it affirmed China's regard for Slovakia "as an important EU country" and produced contracts between Slovak and Chinese companies valued at 75.5 million euro, media coverage of the event focused on a brief, violent encounter between Slovak human rights activists and unidentified Chinese "men in black" wearing radios and what appeared to be official identification badges. Behind the scenes, we are told, FM Lajcak raised the topic of human rights with his Chinese counterpart, but PM Fico and President Gasparovic did not. According to MFA contacts, PM Fico may travel to Beijing in the coming year to sign an agreement on intergovernmental cooperation. End Summary.

DOING BUSINESS: AS WITH RUSSIA, SO WITH CHINA

¶2. (C) Jan Bory, the new Director of MFA's 7th Territorial Department (covering most of Asia), briefed foreign diplomats on June 26 on the results of the visit. According to Bory, PM Fico cited Slovakia's relationship with Russia as an example of what he hoped the relationship with China could become. Fico argued for high-level political engagement in nurturing the relationship, and pointed to a planned wide-gauge rail connection between the Slovak-Ukraine border and Vienna as an example of a project that wouldn't exist but if he and Russian President Putin hadn't become personally involved. Fico and Hu agreed to charge their staffs with developing several concepts for similar large-scale projects on which China and Slovakia can cooperate. Fico's immediate suggestion was Slovak participation on trilateral projects in Africa using funds from Slovakia's international development fund, Slovak Aid. Hu proposed that Slovak firms could participate in the construction of new reactors in Jiangsu province.

¶3. (C) At his with President Gasparovic, President Hu presented the Slovaks with a four-point agenda as the basis for an intergovernmental agreement aimed at strengthening bilateral relations. Bory confessed that the Slovaks had difficulty translating the document from Chinese, and that MFA staff worked overnight to determine what was being proposed. One point, which the Slovak side first understood as "cooperation in humanitarian fields," caused particular confusion. The MFA finally determined the Chinese were proposing educational exchanges. In the end, Bory observed, increased economic trade and investment was the only issue dealt with substantively

anyway.

14. (C) The Chinese delegation proposed new Chinese investments in Slovak infrastructure projects, tourism, spas and mineral water and suggested Slovak firms could offer China know-how in nuclear technology, mining and energy management. Bory said the Chinese delegation was particularly interested in the construction of highways in Slovakia. Earlier this year, according to Bory, the Chinese had offered to build a stretch of Slovak highway under a Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement using Chinese capital, material and labor. "Off-the-record," Bory said the deal fell apart because "one of the government's sponsors -- and I guess you all know who I mean," was upset about possibly losing the contract to supply concrete. Bory confirmed the sponsor in question was JuraĽ Siroky, a former Communist-era intelligence officer believed to be the principal owner of Slovak construction firm Vahostav, and known to be close to the PM.

THE FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING

15. (C) Slovak FM Miro Lajcak raised human rights briefly during a private meeting with his Chinese counterpart, Bory reported, but he emphasized that as a small country Slovakia would not seek to pressure China, but rather offer dialogue. The main topic of the Foreign Ministers' meeting, however, was North Korea and UNSCR 1718. Bory reported that the Chinese FM was firmly opposed to a nuclear-armed North Korea and repeated his country's willingness to see UNSCR 1718 enforced. The Chinese FM reportedly complained about new Slovak visa requirements for

BRATISLAVA 00000298 002.2 OF 002

holders of official Chinese passports. Bory said that FM Lajcak expressed regret, attributing the change to Schengen Treaty requirements. Again, "off-the-record," Bory added that the real problem is that the PRC issues official passports also to officials in State-run companies and "that includes almost every Chinese traveler."

CHINESE "MEN IN BLACK"

16. (SBU) Slovak media, the opposition, and most NGOs paid most attention to what was not openly discussed: the state of human rights in China, and whether the Slovak police acquiesced in Chinese security agents violating the rights of Slovak protesters. On the second day of Hu's visit, Slovak media was dominated by critical reports of the police's handling of confrontations between human rights activists and Chinese "men in black" who, it was alleged, were working with the police. Several such men wearing official-looking badges and sophisticated two-way radios, can be identified in videos of the scene released on the internet.

17. (SBU) A Slovak officer on the scene told Poloff the Chinese men were with the official delegation and were untouchable, as they all had immunity and privileges. The officer indicated one Chinese man in particular, whom the police would have liked to detain, but could not because he was accredited to the Chinese Embassy in Bratislava. Interior Minister Kalinak said he was amused by speculation the men were Chinese agents and that the

police did not cooperate with them. Kalinak later acknowledged that they may have been diplomats accredited to neighboring countries, and explanation that raised more questions. When Parliament's Human Rights Committee summoned the Interior Minister to discuss the issue further, the session had to be cancelled because no coalition MPs showed up for the meeting.

Conclusion and Comment

18. (C) President Hu extended an invitation to all of Slovakia's top Constitutional officials (the President, Speaker of Parliament, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister) to visit China in the coming year. MFA officials speculate that PM Fico will accept the offer and that the intergovernmental agreement would be signed during his visit. Comment: President Hu's trip to Slovakia followed a two-day stop in Russia, but even some top diplomats seemed surprised that it took place. In fact, shortly after the visit, Deputy Foreign Minister Strofova confided to Charge that during her last visit to Beijing, she had extended the invitation to her counterpart. Strofova said he laughed derisively, adding that "we don't visit Paris or Berlin, why would we visit Bratislava?" It will be interesting to see whether the talked about cross-sectoral cooperation and investment takes off in a meaningful way. In the case of Slovak-Russian relations, Fico's stated model, the talk about close cooperation has not yet been borne out by the numbers. End Comment.
BALL